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ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between students' expectations for the environment of the college they are about to enter and the level of formal education completed by their parents was investigated. It was hypothesized that entering freshmen students whose parents both had only a high school education differed from entering freshmen whose parents were both college graduates in their expectations for the universities' environment. Students' expectations were measured by using the College and University Environment Scale (CUES). On the basis of students' responses to a question asking the occupational level of their fathers, students were placed into one of eight categories. A total of 82 students were then given the CUES. Findings include: (1) it may not be useful to categorize students only on the basis of parents' level of education; and (2) significant differences between sexes in their expectations were found. However, this may vary from campus to campus. (SJ)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTERING STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS
FOR THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT AND THE LEVEL OF
FORMAL EDUCATION COMPLETED BY THEIR PARENTS

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EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

While "first generation college students" may probably be found in every college and university, such students make up almost the entire population of some of the most rapidly growing institutions of higher education. What effect this may have upon a campus is not known; but if the level of the parents' education affects the student's expectations for the college he is entering, it may be an important input factor during these times when many institutions are experiencing rapid enrollment increases.

A major portion of the more than 120 per cent increase in enrollment (Simon and Grant, 1968) which has occurred in the past twelve years in two- and four-year institutions of higher education in the United States has been students who came from homes in which neither parent had attended college. For the Fall of 1968, the American Council on Education estimated that, nationally, 57.7 per cent of the fathers and 65.1 per cent of the mothers of the entering freshmen did not have any formal education beyond high school, and that only 24.5 per cent of the fathers and 16.1 per cent of the mothers had a college or post graduate degree (Astin, Creager, Boruch, and Bayer, 1968).

In this study, the relationship between students' expectations for the environment of the college they are about to enter and the level of formal education completed by their parents was investigated. It was hypothesized that entering freshman students whose parents both had only a high school education differed from entering freshman students whose parents were both college graduates in their expectations for the

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university's environment. Directional hypotheses suggesting specific ways in which the group would differ were not generated. The study was strictly exploratory in nature.

Social science theory and research on family influence on children suggest the level of education of parents may be one factor determining students' expectations. The theory of human behavior developed in Towards a General Theory of Action (Parsons and Shils, 1951) deals especially with the individual's frame of reference and its effects upon his behavior. The theory proposes that how an individual views a situation, and thus his expectations for it, are a product of the social, personal, and cultural systems to which he belongs. The family of origin can be considered a social system to which the student belongs. Thus, if the educational level of the parents is a characteristic which affects the way the family influences its children, then this characteristic of the family may influence the student's anticipations for the college environment.

The level of education achieved by the parents has been found to be related to how the family influences its children (Sewell and Shah, 1968; Watson, 1965; Holland, 1959; Hall and Barger, 1967). But the overall social class position of the family also has been found to be related to what effect the home has upon the children (Hewer, 1965; Reddy and Parameswaran, 1966), and, in some areas, similar characteristics of the children have been found to correlate with both social class position and educational level of the parents (Sewell and Shah, 1967). So, whether or not a social class description, or a description of the educational level of the parents, or even some other description,

is accurate when indicating the possible source of a particular difference observed in students is not clearly indicated. In an effort to determine if it is meaningful to use the educational level of the parents when indicating differences in the students' expectations for the environment of the college, this researcher investigated the question by controlling for social class differences and using the parents' educational level as the independent variable.

Method

The students' expectations were measured by using the College and University Environment Scale (CUES) (Pace, 1963). In the words of Pace:

The CUES are designed to describe the institutional climate of a campus through the perceptions and reportings of its students. The CUES instrument consists of 150 statements about college life: features and facilities of the campus, rules and regulations, faculty, curricula, instruction and examinations, student life, extracurricular organizations, and other aspects of the institutional environment, all of which help define the intellectual-social-cultural climate of a college as students perceive it (Pace, 1966, p. 1).

Measures for five dimensions of the environment are provided by the CUES. They are: (1) Practicality: the extent to which personal status, procedures, and practical benefits are important, (2) Community: the extent to which the campus is friendly, cohesive, sympathetic, and supportive, (3) Awareness: the extent to which the environment emphasizes self understanding, identity, and reflection, (4) Propriety: the extent to which the campus environment is considerate and polite, and (5) Scholarship: the extent to which the environment emphasizes academic and scholarly achievement.

During August, 1968, two groups of entering freshmen at Indiana

State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, were chosen for study. One group had both parents who were college graduates. The other group had parents both of whom had completed high school but did not have any additional formal education. The level of education of the parents was determined from the students' responses on a questionnaire each student had completed as part of a summer orientation program. Of the 2586 students who completed the questionnaire, 144 had both parents with at least a four-year college degree, and 989 students were the children of parents both of whom were high school graduates only.

On the basis of the students' responses to a question asking the occupational level of their fathers, the students were placed into one of eight categories. The categories were (1) unskilled worker, (2) semi-skilled worker, (3) skilled worker, (4) service worker, (5) office worker, semi-professional, (6) lower professional, manager, (7) high executive or owner of larger firm and (8) profession requiring advanced degree.

Only occupational categories number 4, 5, 6 and 7 contained students from both educational levels, and since the groups to be compared were to be matched on occupational level of the fathers in an effort to control for variation due to social class differences, only students in these categories were further considered. This left forty-four males and forty-one females in the college graduate group and 201 males and 187 females in the high school graduate group. On the basis of how many students of each sex were in each occupational category in the college graduate group, the students to be retained for further consideration

from the high school graduate group were selected randomly from the corresponding occupational category and sex.

The students who had been selected were sent by mail a copy of the CUES. They were asked to respond to the instrument and to return the completed answer sheet to the author before the students were to come to the campus for classes in September, 1968. Returns were received from 82 students in each group--forty-two males and forty females.

The groups of students were compared on their scores on each of the five scales of the CUES. The design used to test the hypothesis was a two-way analysis of variance with un-weighted means (Walker and Lev, 1953, p. 381). Five analyses, one for each scale of the CUES, were conducted. The two factors were: (1) educational level of the parents and (2) sex of the subjects. The two-way design was chosen because it made it possible to control for the sex of the subject and to test for interaction between the sex of the subject and the educational level of the parents. It has been established (Pace, 1966; Berdie, 1967) that the sex of the reporter may be expected to influence his expectations for the environment. Thus, in addition to the primary hypothesis, two supplementary questions were stated and tested:

Did male entering students differ from female entering students in their expectations for the college environment?

Did the educational level of parents affect male entering students' expectations differently than it affected the expectations of female entering students?

Findings

The results of testing the primary hypothesis and the two secondary hypotheses for each of the five scales are presented in Table I.

None of the F ratios computed for the comparison of the students grouped by educational level of their parents was statistically significant at or beyond the .10 level. This was true also for the comparison on the basis of the interaction between the sex of the student and the educational level of his parents.

In two cases, the Community Scale and the Awareness Scale, the difference between the sexes was significant well beyond the .10 level and significance was approached on the Propriety Scale.

Table II presents the means and standard deviation for each group. On all scales the female total mean scores were higher than the total for the males. Except for the Propriety Scale, the total standard deviations of the males' scores were larger than those of the females. The males tended to score lower and to have more variation in their scores than the females. However, as it has already been indicated, for only the Community and Awareness Scales were the computed F ratios significant at or beyond the .10 level. On nine of the ten comparisons included in Table II, the mean score of the first generation students was higher than that of their counterparts whose parents were college graduates; and the standard deviations of their scores were smaller in six of the ten comparisons. However, as has been indicated, none of the F ratios were statistically significant.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that, in attempting to identify students' expectations for the campus environment, it may not be useful to categorize them on only the basis of their parents' level of educational achievement. However, the fact that the first generation group

TABLE I

F RATIO VALUES FOR ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF EXPECTATIONS
AS MEASURED BY EACH SCALE OF THE CUES

COMPARISONS	SCALE OF CUES			
	PRACTICALITY	COMMUNITY	AWARENESS	PROPRIETY
Educational Levels	0.378	0.998	1.995	0.025
Sexes	1.457	7.780*	4.258*	2.734
Educational Level x Sex	0.000	0.117	1.240	0.151

*F (1,160; .10) = 2.74

TABLE II

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SCORES
ON EACH SCALE OF THE CUES.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF PARENTS AND SEX OF STUDENT		SCALE OF CUES								SCHOLARSHIP	
		PRACTICALITY		COMMUNITY		AWARENESS		PROPRIETY		SCHOLARSHIP	
										Mean	S.D.
N		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
42	College Males	19.12	3.56	20.43	4.97	21.52	4.69	15.21	4.06	21.02	4.31
42	High School Males	19.40	2.80	20.86	4.11	23.21	4.48	15.38	4.71	22.12	4.20
84	Total Males	19.26	3.19	20.64	4.54	22.37	4.59	15.30	4.37	21.57	4.27
40	College Females	19.67	2.58	22.02	3.98	23.65	3.89	16.70	5.17	21.97	3.43
40	High School Females	19.95	2.60	22.90	3.46	23.85	4.10	16.30	4.63	22.42	3.64
80	Total Females	19.81	2.58	22.46	3.73	23.75	3.98	16.50	4.88	22.20	3.51

tended to score higher on each scale of the CUES may indicate that a multi-factor social class distinction, rather than a single-factor such as that of educational level of parents, may be accurate in accounting for differences in expectations for the environment. Many times the label "first generation college student" is used to imply differences existing between such individuals and other students. The findings of this study may be interpreted as indicating that at least in some cases this label is too narrow in its description to be meaningful in accounting for variations in observed behavior.

The finding of significant differences between the sexes in their expectations as measured by the Awareness and Community Scales is consistent with findings reported by Pace (1966) except that Pace reported on the perceptions of students already in the environment rather than on expectations of entering students. The findings reported here suggest the differences observed by Pace may have existed prior to the students experiencing the campus. Berdie (1967), however, found that males and females had differing expectations for a university environment on the Practicality, Awareness and Scholarship Scales. But Berdie's findings differ with those reported here for the Community, Practicality and Scholarship Scales. Thus, the relationship between the sex of the student and his expectations for the campus climate may vary from campus to campus and does not appear to be a predictable relationship.

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